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ABSTRACT

This document offers the results of an education survey taken in the Dayton, Ohio, area in August 1998. The survey included telephone interviews with some 824 area residents. The principal results are presented first, organized under nine major headings: satisfaction level; problems in the schools; proposals for improvement; parental choice; charter schools; standards and testing; teachers and unions; school funding; and mandatory busing. The survey provides profiles of those who participated in the polling, including race, income level, and whether their children attended public or private schools. Specific areas addressed in the survey include issues involving discipline, overcrowding, bad teachers, and moving trouble-making students into alternative schools. The results indicate that most adults and parents in the Miami Valley and Dayton public schools oppose mandatory busing. They think teacher pay should be linked to teacher performance, favor the start of new community schools in suburban and rural areas, support choice in deciding on a public school for their children, believe their local school board is doing a good job, and give mostly A's and B's to the school their oldest child attends. These favorable ratings fall when those surveyed were asked to grade public schools in the nation as a whole. (RJM)

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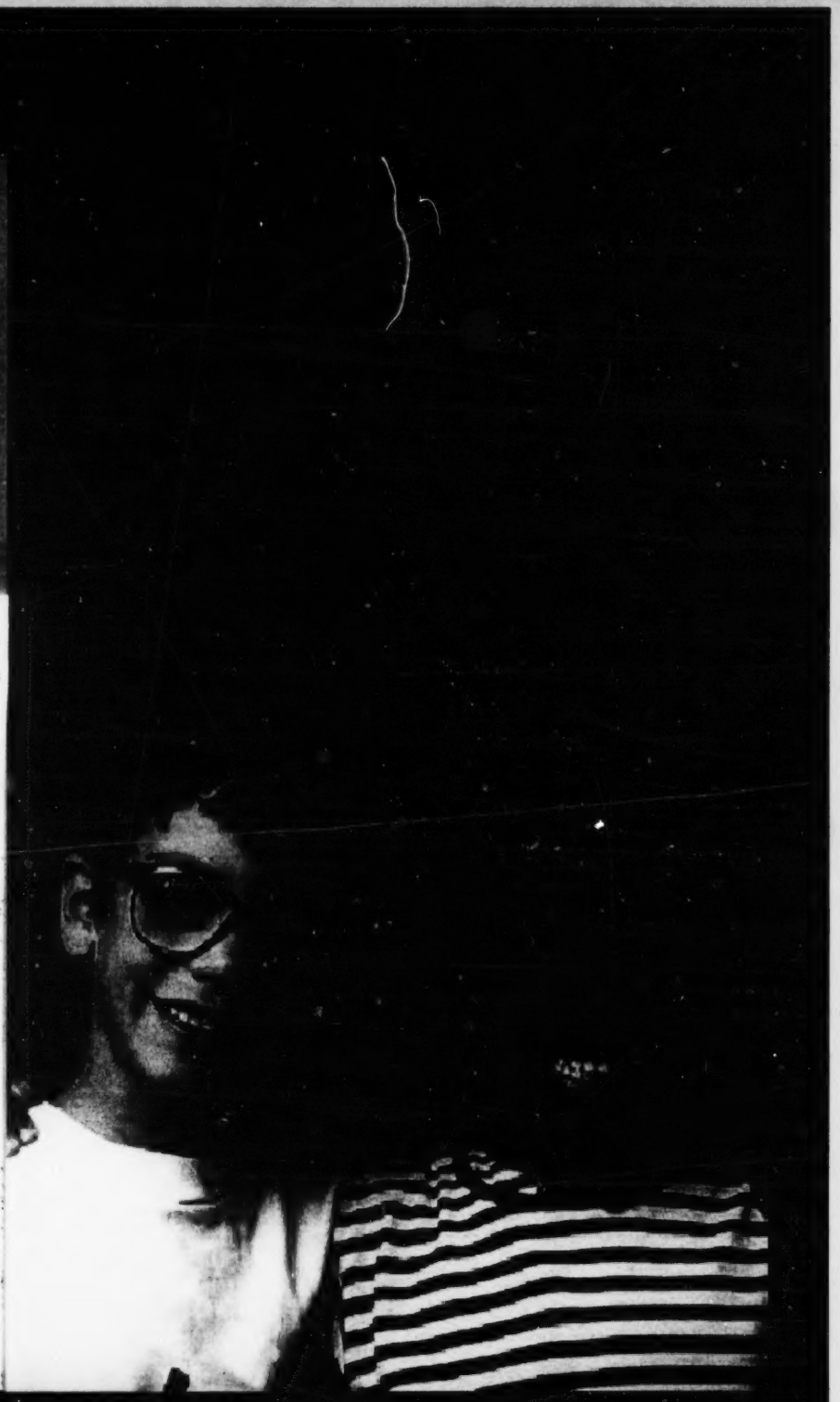

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Fordham Report

October 1998

Education Reform in the Dayton Area

Public Attitudes and Opinions

Analysis of the August 1998 Findings
by
Anita D. Suda, Paragon Opinion Research

with commentaries by
Michelle Campbell
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Introduction

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is pleased to bring the Dayton community the results of what we believe is the most thorough and extensive survey ever conducted of public attitudes toward education and education reform in the Dayton area.

Education increasingly finds itself at the top of America's domestic policy agenda. Politicians of all stripes talk constantly about improving the schools and boosting student achievement. But how best to do this? It's our view that important decisions about such vital issues ought not be shaped entirely by the enthusiasms of politicians and the demands of education's countless interest groups. It's vital that the public—parents, especially, but also voters, taxpayers and the "man and woman in the street"— be heard, too. Accordingly, we set out to provide Dayton (and Ohio) policymakers with reliable information about the concerns that the consumers of education hold and the reform ideas that they favor. In a successful democracy, it is essential that policymakers not be estranged from the citizens they represent.

The survey presented in these pages was conducted in August by the Dayton-based Paragon Opinion Research, which interviewed some 824 area residents by telephone. Paragon has conducted hundreds of surveys in Dayton since 1975, serving such organizations as the Dayton Public Library, Kettering Medical Center, the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority, and the Downtown Dayton Partnership. We thank Paragon's president, Anita D. Suda, for her professionalism, her accuracy, her thorough understanding of the art and science of survey research, and her many contributions to the analysis of these data—and, not least, for authoring the principal portion of this report.

A number of questions were taken directly from a respected national education survey that is conducted annually by the Gallup organization for the educators' honorary fraternity, Phi Delta Kappa. (The most recent national results were published last month in that organization's journal, *The Phi Delta Kappan*.) We used questions as phrased in the 1998 survey. We thank Lowell Rose, executive director emeritus of Phi Delta Kappa, for sharing the questions (but not the answers!) in advance of their publication.

All other questions in this survey were reviewed and commented on in advance by eight distinguished Dayton-area education experts: Sue Elling of the Alliance for Education, C. Jeanine Hufford of the Mathile Family Foundation, Dean Tom Lasley of the University of Dayton, Doug Mangen of the Dayton Business Committee, Sam Staley of the Buckeye Institute, Don Thompson of the Alliance for Education, Reverend Daryl Ward of Omega Baptist Church, and Dr. James Williams, Superintendent of the Dayton Public Schools. We thank

them for their excellent counsel, although Ms. Suda and we assume responsibility for the final selection and wording.

The report proceeds in this way:

Immediately following this introduction, you will find the principal survey results, organized under nine major headings to make them accessible to readers. These are presented without comment or interpretation. Asterisks are supplied where the sample size (for sub-populations) may be too small to support robust statistical inferences.

Next, Ms. Suda recapitulates and interprets the survey results and explains the methodology and sample population.

Then we offer analyses and interpretations by five area leaders and education experts, as well as my own comments on the implications of these data. Our thanks to Michelle Campbell of the Parents' Coalition for Change, to Sue Elling of the Alliance for Education, to Dean Tom Lasley of the University of Dayton, to the Buckeye Institute's Sam Staley, and to Dayton school superintendent James Williams for their significant contributions to this forum.

Finally, the appendix reproduces the entire survey instrument.

A rich trove of survey data naturally lends itself to many analyses. Indeed, Ms. Suda has already performed more than we have space to include in this report. (It should be noted, however, that many of those not published here involve "close-up" looks at subpopulations whose sample size is often too small to draw solid conclusions.) Anyone wishing to obtain the full results, including cross-tabulations for race, income, gender, etc. may contact the Foundation at 202-223-5452.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation underwrote this project. We would welcome comments, feedback and advice, particularly because we are considering repeating surveys such as this on a regular cycle and we would like to know whether readers find it useful and how it can be improved.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a private foundation that supports research, publications, and action projects in elementary/secondary education reform at the national level and in the Dayton area. Further information can be obtained from our web site (www.edexcellence.net) or by writing us at 1015 18th Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036. (We can also be e-mailed through our web site.) This report is available in full on the Foundation's web site and hard copies can be obtained by calling 1-888-TBF-7474 (single copies are free).

Chester E. Finn, Jr., President
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
Washington, D.C.
October 1998

Principal Findings

The tables on the following pages represent answers to every question on the survey instrument. They have been grouped by topic for ease of reading. Please see the section, "Analysis of the Findings," for a discussion of the survey methodology and sample. The following notations will appear throughout the tables:

PDK The question and national data come from the 1998 Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll.

* The sample size is too small (less than 200) to draw robust conclusions.

The following table identifies the number of interviews completed and the sampling error by sub-population at a 95% confidence interval. These sampling errors may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) which the results may be expected to vary when they are close to 50%. The further away from the 50% mark the results, the smaller the expected sampling error.

	# of Interviews Completed	**Sampling Error @ 95% Confidence Interval**
Miami Valley Adults	618	4.1%
Public School Parents	207	7.0
Private School Parents	31	17.6
White	496	4.4
African American	79	11.0
Less than $25,000	164	7.7
$25,001-$45,000	211	6.7
$45,001 Plus	182	7.3
Dayton Public School Parents	206	7.0%
White	80	11.0
African American	112	9.3
Less than $25,000	104	9.6
$25,001-$45,000	64	12.3
$45,001 Plus	26	19.2

Satisfaction Levels

1) Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here – A, B, C, D, or Fail? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK	Miami Valley Adults	U.S. Adults PDK
A & B	40	59	52	51	46
A	9	15	15	14	10
B	31	44	37	37	36
C	31	27	33	24	31
D	13	7	9	8	9
Fail	9	4	4	6	5
Don't Know	7	3	2	10	9

Corresponds to question 1 on the survey instrument.

2) How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally – A, B, C, D, or Fail? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK	Miami Valley Adults	U.S. Adults PDK
A & B	28	13	16	16	18
A	6	1	2	1	1
B	22	12	14	15	17
C	40	51	52	49	49
D	9	16	13	16	15
Fail	2	3	4	4	5
Don't Know	21	17	15	14	13

Corresponds to question 2 on the survey instrument.

3) Using the A, B, C,D, Fail scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK
A & B	66	72	62
A	25	24	22
B	41	48	40
C	20	19	25
D	7	3	8
Fail	5	2	3
Don't Know	2	5	2

Corresponds to question 3 on the survey instrument.

Dayton Up Close

3a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
A & B	72	64	71	67	65
A	31	21	29	24	27
B	41	43	42	43	38
C	16	20	16	19	31
D	6	10	7	8	4
Fail	5	5	3	5	0
Don't Know	3	1	4	2	0

Corresponds to question 3 on the survey instrument.

4) Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with each of the following there? (Percent saying unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.)

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents
The size of the classes	25%	18%
Your child's safety at school	20%	7%
The extent of parental involvement	17%	16%
The quality of the curriculum or academic program	15%	11%

Corresponds to questions 4-7 on the survey instrument.

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5) Do you think that the local school board in your community is doing a good job or a poor job of improving public education?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Good Job	63	67	42
Poor Job	26	25	45
Don't Know	12	8	14

Corresponds to question 42 on the survey instrument.

Problems in the Schools

6) Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious, or not a problem in the public schools in your community. (Percent saying serious problem.)

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Parents who don't make their children study hard and behave properly	42	35	36
Not enough discipline	34	22	38
Students not learning enough	25	18	28
Not enough attention to the basics	23	15	24
Overcrowded classrooms	15	12	20
Bad teachers	11	8	16

Corresponds to questions 8-13 on the survey instrument.

Dayton Up Close

6a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Parents who don't make their children study hard and behave properly	38	31	32	39	34
Not enough discipline	37	37	39	41	23
Students not learning enough	25	32	21	38	31
Not enough attention to the basics	25	24	23	29	15
Overcrowded classrooms	21	19	18	21	27
Bad teachers	15	17	14	17	20

Corresponds to questions 8-13 on the survey instrument.

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Proposals for Improvement

7) Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one. (Percent saying they support.)

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Require that all students pass Ohio's proficiency tests in core academic subjects in order to move on to the next grade.	87	85	80
Stop state colleges and universities from admitting students who are not ready for college-level academic work.	75	76	67
Allow new community schools to be started in suburban and rural areas.	72	70	72
Reduce class sizes in all schools, even if it means spending more money or cutting other areas of the school budget.	67	67	73
Move students who are troublemakers into alternative schools.	66	68	71
End certification of teachers as long as they can pass a test proving that they know their subject.	63	60	63
Pay teachers more if their students learn enough to pass state tests in core academic subjects.	60	68	69
Allow students to choose any public school in the state, even one in another district.	54	58	69
Allow individual schools to make decisions about what to teach, which teachers to hire, and how to spend their money, rather than having decisions made by the board or superintendent's office.	42	40	45
Fire teachers if their students do not learn enough to pass state tests.	38	39	32
Allow private companies to manage some of the new public community schools.	37	39	36

Corresponds to questions 27-37 on the survey instrument.

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8) If the public schools in your community failed for many years to give kids a quality education, which of the following would you want done first?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Have the state take over and run the local public schools.	22	19	12
Have companies that specialize in education run the local public schools.	19	23	16
Increase the money the public schools get.	18	17	23
Give parents money to send their children to private schools.	15	15	27
Fire all the staff at the unsuccessful school and start over.	11	13	9

Corresponds to question 41 on the survey instrument.

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Parental Choice

9) A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal in your state? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK	Miami Valley Adults	U.S. Adults PDK
Favor	74	60	56	54	51
Oppose	20	34	40	40	45
Don't Know	6	6	4	6	4

Corresponds to question 19 on the survey instrument.

Dayton Up Close

9a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Favor	74	75	77	77	58
Oppose	21	17	16	20	35
Don't Know	5	8	7	3	7

Corresponds to question 19 on the survey instrument.

10) Suppose you could send your oldest child to any public, private, or church-related school of your choice, with tuition paid for by the government. Would you send your oldest child to the school he or she now attends, or to a different school? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK
Present (public) school	37	51	51
Different School	59	44	46
Don't Know	4	5	3

Corresponds to question 20 on the survey instrument.

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10a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Present (public) school	36	39	38	38	34
Different school	61	59	58	60	58
Don't Know	4	2	4	2	8

Corresponds to question 20 on the survey instrument.

11) For the next several years, private donations will make it possible for hundreds of low-income children in Montgomery County to attend the private or public school of their choice. No government money is involved. This is called the PACE program. Are you aware of or have you ever heard about this PACE program?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Private School Parents*
Yes	31	24	28	44
No	68	73	72	56
Don't Know	2	2	1	2

Corresponds to question 21 on the survey instrument.

12) Do you support or oppose the PACE program?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Private School Parents*
Support	59	53	64	66
Oppose	12	13	9	9
Don't Know	30	34	27	24

Corresponds to question 22 on the survey instrument.

13) Do you support allowing students to choose any public school in the state, even one in another school district?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	54	58	69
Oppose	41	37	28
Don't Know	5	4	3

Corresponds to question 27 on the survey instrument.

Charter Schools

14) Community schools, usually called charter schools, are public schools that are started by teachers, parents, and/or community groups. They are free from most rules and regulations except health, safety, and civil rights, and are open to all children whose parents choose them. They do not charge tuition. Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in your community?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	59	60	66
Oppose	24	21	19
Don't Know	17	19	15

Corresponds to question 23 on the survey instrument.

15) The community school movement might lead to the creation of several new public schools in Dayton with different themes, educational specialties, and teaching methods that parents would be able to choose among. Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in Dayton?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	67	67	75
Oppose	19	18	14
Don't Know	14	15	11

Corresponds to question 24 on the survey instrument.

16) If there was a new school in your community would you consider sending your children there as an alternative to the schools they presently attend?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Yes	57	59	57
No	35	31	29
Don't Know	9	10	14

Corresponds to question 26 on the survey instrument.

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16a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Yes	53	60	56	57	51
No	34	27	27	32	38
Don't Know	13	13	17	11	11

Corresponds to question 26 on the survey instrument.

17) Do you support allowing new community schools to be started in suburban and rural areas? (Ohio law now only allows them in eight major cities including Dayton.)

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	72	70	72
Oppose	17	20	19
Don't Know	11	10	9

Corresponds to question 30 on the survey instrument.

18) Do you support allowing private companies to manage some of the new public community schools?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	37	39	36
Oppose	54	51	51
Don't Know	9	10	13

Corresponds to question 29 on the survey instrument.

19) Under current Ohio law, teachers' unions have the power to prevent an existing public school from being changed into a community school. Should unions have this power or not?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Should have	22	24	32
Should not have	64	60	55
Don't Know	15	16	13

Corresponds to question 25 on the survey instrument.

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Standards & Testing

20) Do you support requiring that all students pass Ohio's proficiency tests in core academic subjects in order to move on to the next grade?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	87	85	80
Oppose	11	14	17
Don't Know	2	2	3

Corresponds to question 31 on the survey instrument.

21) All students in Ohio have to pass the state's 9th grade proficiency test in core academic subjects in order to graduate from high school. Do you support or oppose this policy?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	87	85	83
Oppose	11	12	16
Don't Know	2	2	1

Corresponds to question 40 on the survey instrument.

22) Do you support stopping state colleges and universities from admitting students who are not ready for college-level academic work?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	75	76	67
Oppose	21	22	28
Don't Know	3	3	5

Corresponds to question 32 on the survey instrument.

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23) How well informed do you think you are about how the individual schools in your community rank in test scores and graduation rates?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Very Well Informed	25	25	25
Somewhat Well Informed	47	47	50
Not Well Informed	25	26	23
Don't Know	3	2	2

Corresponds to question 15 on the survey instrument.

24) A proposal has been made that the federal government administer a voluntary national testing program that would routinely test fourth- and eight-grade students in order to measure the performance of the nation's public schools. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents PDK	Miami Valley Adults	U.S. Adults PDK
Favor	85	81	78	77	71
Oppose	12	16	19	18	25
Don't Know	3	3	3	4	4

Corresponds to question 38 on the survey instrument.

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Teachers & Unions

25) Do you support paying teachers more if their students learn enough to pass state tests in core subjects?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	60	68	69
Oppose	35	28	23
Don't Know	6	5	8

Corresponds to question 34 on the survey instrument.

26) Do you support firing teachers if their students do not learn enough to pass state tests in core academic subjects?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	38	39	32
Oppose	55	54	58
Don't Know	8	7	10

Corresponds to question 35 on the survey instrument.

27) Do you support ending certification of teachers as long as they can pass a test proving that they know their subject?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	63	60	63
Oppose	32	35	31
Don't Know	4	5	6

Corresponds to question 33 on the survey instrument.

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28) Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education in the U.S.? PDK

	Dayton Public School Parents	Miami Valley Public School Parents	U.S. Public School Parents[PDK]	Miami Valley Adults	U.S. Adults[PDK]
Helped	26	20	28	22	27
Hurt	21	25	24	29	26
Made No Difference	42	47	39	38	37
Don't Know	11	8	9	10	10

Corresponds to question 43 on the survey instrument.

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School Funding

29) Do you believe that the public schools in your community have more than enough funding to do a good job, just the right amount of funding, or too little funding?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
More Than Enough	19	15	11
Right Amount	32	30	20
Too Little	41	49	66
Don't Know	8	6	3

Corresponds to question 16 on the survey instrument.

Miami Valley Up Close

29a) Miami Valley Adults by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
More Than Enough	10	20	14	18	23
Right Amount	13	37	25	37	32
Too Little	65	35	50	38	40
Don't Know	12	8	11	7	5

Corresponds to question 16 on the survey instrument.

30) Do you believe that the taxpayers in your community are getting their money's worth from the public schools or not?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Getting	42	44	23
Not Getting	51	48	73
Don't Know	8	8	4

Corresponds to question 17 on the survey instrument.

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Miami Valley Up Close

30a) Miami Valley Adults by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Getting	24	45	27	45	52
Not Getting	66	47	64	51	41
Don't Know	9	8	9	4	8

Corresponds to question 17 on the survey instrument.

31) Should all the school districts in Ohio receive the same amount of money to spend per student, regardless of the district's ability to provide that funding?

	Miami Valley Adults	**Miami Valley Public School Parents**	**Dayton Public School Parents**
Should	68	71	84
Should Not	25	25	11
Don't Know	7	4	5

Corresponds to question 18 on the survey instrument.

Miami Valley Up Close

31a) Spotlight on Miami Valley adults: Break-outs by race and income.

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Should	66	69	73	73	61
Should Not	29	24	19	23	33
Don't Know	5	8	9	5	6

Corresponds to question 18 on the survey instrument.

Mandatory Busing

32) A proposal has been made that Dayton Public Schools should no longer be required to bus students to achieve racial balance and that students should be free to attend schools in their neighborhood or the schools of their choice. In general, do you support or oppose this proposal?

	Miami Valley Adults	Miami Valley Public School Parents	Dayton Public School Parents
Support	82	84	86
Oppose	14	12	13
Don't Know	4	4	1

Corresponds to question 39 on the survey instrument.

Dayton Up Close

32a) Dayton Public School Parents by Race and Income

	AFRICAN-AMERICAN*	WHITE*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME < $25,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME $25,001-$45,000*	HOUSEHOLD INCOME > $45,000*
Support	81	94	81	91	96
Oppose	19	5	18	10	4
Don't Know	1	1	2	0	0

Corresponds to question 39 on the survey instrument.

Analysis of the Findings

By Anita D. Suda, President, Paragon Opinion Research

Methodology

Eight hundred twenty-four interviews were conducted with a random sample of residents living in the Miami Valley. For the purposes of this survey the Miami Valley is defined as all of Montgomery County and portions of Greene, Miami, Warren and Clark counties (the Prime Marketing Area (PMA) of the *Dayton Daily News*). Households were selected through the use of a Random Digit Dial. This is a type of probability sample in which all telephone exchange prefixes in the survey area are coupled with lists of four random digit numbers. This allows all telephone households, both listed and non-listed, an equal probability of selection. Within households, the adult with the next birthday was interviewed.

Interviewing took place August 8-29, 1998, primarily between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Appointments were kept at other times as necessary, and each potential respondent who could not be reached during the evening hours was tried at least once during the daytime and once on Saturday. Up to five call-backs were used to interview specific respondents.

Had Paragon sought to survey every household in the PMA using the same questionnaire, the odds are 19 out of 20 that the findings would differ from these poll results by no more than 4.1 percentage points in either direction. The sampling error for the sub-sample of DPS parents is within 7% at the 95% confidence level.

Below are the number of interviews completed in each of the major segments and the sampling error associated with each. These sampling errors may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) which the results may be expected to vary when they are close to 50%. The further away from the 50% mark the results, the smaller the expected sampling error.

The margin of error for sub-groups, i.e. African-Americans, whites, males, females, etc., is larger than the figures quoted below and is dependent on the number of interviews completed in each sub-group.

	# of Interviews Completed*	Sampling Error @ 95% Confidence Interval
PMA	618	4.1%
No Children in School	381	5.1%
Public School Parents	207	7.0%
Parochial/Private School Parents	31	17.6%
Dayton Public School Parents	206	7.0%
*Numbers do not add up to 824 because of the proportional weighting.		

Understanding the Sample

824 interviews were conducted with residents living in the Miami Valley. In order to obtain enough interviews with parents of children in the Dayton Public Schools, and to reduce the need for weighting of the data, the interviews were divided into two sub samples: 206 with parents of Dayton Public School students and 618 with a random sample of all residents who live in the Miami Valley.

Throughout this report, discussion will concentrate on the PMA (Prime Marketing Area of the *Dayton Daily News*) which indicates the 618 random interviews with residents of the five county area. These results contain the responses of DPS parents in relationship to their overall proportion of the population. The segments of *No Children in School, Parents of Public School Students* and *Parents of Parochial/Private School Students* all are sub-segments of the total PMA results. The results for *Parents of Dayton Public School Students* are not included in the overall PMA results, as this is an over-sampling which includes only parents of DPS students.

Residents of the PMA tend to be white, fairly well educated and relatively wealthy. Overall, 80% of Miami Valley residents are white, while only 13% are African American, and 5% are of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Residents who are parents of public school students as well as those who do not have children in school have similar racial characteristics (See Table 1). Those residents who have children in Dayton Public Schools, however, have very different racial characteristics. Overall, 39% of these respondents are white, while 54% are African-Americans and 4% of other racial backgrounds.

Overall, a plurality of the sample are high school graduates. In the PMA that proportion is 36% and in Dayton it is 49%. In the PMA, however, almost three in ten (27%) residents have at least a four-year college degree, while in Dayton, that proportion is only 10%. At the other extreme, only 9% of PMA residents have not completed high school, while 13% of Dayton parents have not.

In the PMA, the median income is approximately $35,000, with 46% of residents reporting incomes less than that, and 45% reporting incomes greater than that. Parents who have children in the Dayton Public Schools do not have this type of wealth. Overall, 72% of these individuals have incomes of less than $35,000 per year. In fact, more than half (51%) of them report incomes of less than $25,000 per year.

Gender was weighted in the PMA to reflect the overall proportion of men and women in the area. In the Dayton Public Schools parents segment, gender was weighted to closely approximate the proportion of male and female parents who send their children to DPS.

	Segment				
	PMA n=600	No Children in School n=382	Parents of Public School Students n=207	Parents of Parochial/ Private School Students n=31	Parents of DPS Students n=206
Age					
18-24	12%	18%	2%	-	5%
25-39	35%	21%	57%	60%	65%
40-54	29%	22%	39%	40%	29%
55-64	10%	16%	1%	-	1%
65 or Older	14%	22%	1%	-	1%
Race:					
White	80%	80%	80%	95%	39%
Black/African American	13%	12%	16%	-	54%
Other	5%	5%	3%	-	4%
Refused	2%	3%	1%	5%	3%
Education:					
Less than High School	9%	11%	7%	8%	13%
High School graduate	36%	33%	41%	28%	49%
Some college/technical	28%	29%	29%	16%	28%
Four-year degree	16%	16%	15%	30%	7%
Post college work/degree	11%	12%	8%	18%	3%
Income:					
Less than $15,000	10%	11%	10%	3%	22%
$15,001-$25,000	17%	18%	15%	12%	29%
$25,001-$35,000	19%	20%	18%	18%	21%
$35,001-$45,000	15%	14%	18%	6%	10%
$45,001-$60,000	13%	10%	15%	31%	8%
$60,001 +	17%	16%	18%	22%	4%
Refused	10%	12%	5%	9%	6%
Gender:					
Male	47%	48%	48%	31%	31%
Female	53%	52%	53%	69%	69%

Grading the Schools

The grades assigned to the public schools in the Miami Valley are high, with 51% assigning those schools a grade of A or B. If Cs are included, 75% give the local public schools at least a passing grade (A, B, or C). These results are very similar to those seen nationally, where 46% of local schools were graded an A or B, and the proportion who gave the schools in the community at least a passing grade is 77%.

Parents of public school students are even more satisfied, with 59% who grade the local public schools an A or B and 86% who give them passing grades. If the parent has a child who attends the Dayton Public Schools, he/she is much less impressed. Forty percent of DPS parents assign a grade of A or B to the schools and 71% give them a passing grade. Even more alarming is the fact that 9% of DPS parents say their schools are failing and 22% assign grades of D or Fail.

Typically, African-Americans are less impressed with the quality of the schools than are whites. Overall, only 38% of African-Americans assigned a grade of A or B to the quality of their public schools. In comparison, 54% of whites give the schools a grade of A or B.

Nationally, schools do not receive nearly as high a grade. Overall, only 16% of PMA residents assign a grade of A or B to the nation's public schools; 49% assign them a grade of C, meaning that just two-thirds (65%) of the population think the public schools nationally are passing. These results mirror those found nationally.

Dayton Public School parents are much more impressed with the nation's public schools than are parents who send their children to other public schools. Twenty-eight percent of DPS parents grade the nation's schools as an A or B, with an additional 40% who give them a C grade. In the PMA, only 13% assign a grade of A or B. 51%, however, give the nation's schools a C grade.

(Note: NPS = non-public school)

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, or Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools in this community were graded the same way. What grade would you give the schools in your community?						
	National Adults	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
A/B	46%	51%	48%	59%	40%	30%
A	10%	14%	14%	15%	9%	19%
B	36%	37%	34%	44%	31%	11%
C	31%	24%	23%	27%	31%	15%
D	9%	8%	8%	7%	13%	22%
Fail	5%	6%	7%	4%	9%	22%
Dk/Na	9%	10%	14%	3%	7%	12%

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the nation's public schools, A, B, C, D or Fail?						
	National Adults	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
A/B	18%	16%	19%	13%	28%	6%
A	1%	1%	1%	1%	6%	
B	17%	15%	18%	12%	22%	6%
C	49%	49%	49%	51%	40%	39%
D	15%	16%	15%	16%	9%	26%
Fail	5%	4%	4%	3%	2%	15%
Dk/Na	13%	14%	13%	17%	21%	15%

Whites are more critical of the nation's schools than are their African American counterparts. Overall 5% of whites give the nation's schools a failing grade; 22% give them a D or Fail. Among African-Americans, only 6% give the nation's schools a D or Fail, with just 1% who says they are failing.

Grading the School the Oldest Child Attends

Respondents who have children in school were asked to grade the school their oldest child attends using the same A through Fail scale. Overall, parents whose children attend public schools in the PMA are very satisfied with the school their oldest child attends, assigning it an A or B grade in 72% of the cases. This is a much higher proportion than what is found nationally (62%).

Parents of DPS students are also more impressed, as 66% grade it an A or B. Race is again a major variable in response. Among white respondents in the PMA, 79% grade the school their oldest child attends an A or B, with a third who grade it an A. Among African American respondents, just half (52%) chose the A or B grade with only 16% who assigned the A grade. African American respondents whose children attend DPS are more positive: 72% give the school their oldest child attends an A or B. In comparison, only 64% of white respondents whose children attend DPS chose these high grades.

Using the A, B, C, D, or Fail scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?				
	National Parents	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
A/B	62%	72%	66%	100%
A	22%	24%	25%	78%
B	40%	48%	41%	22%
C	25%	19%	20%	
D	8%	3%	7%	
Fail	3%	2%	5%	
Don't Know	2%	5%	2%	

DPS parents are much less satisfied with their child's safety at school than are those parents whose children attend public schools in the PMA. Overall 89% of the parents whose children attend public school in the PMA are very satisfied (21%) or satisfied (68%) with their child's safety. Among DPS parents, only 76% are satisfied; 16% of those are very satisfied.

Race plays an important role in the perception of safety. Among parents in the PMA, 32% of whites are very satisfied with the safety of their oldest child. If the parent is African American only 14% are very satisfied. In the Dayton school system this dichotomy does not exist. 17% of white parents and 19% of African American parents are very satisfied with their oldest child's safety.

Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with Your Child's Safety At School?

	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Very Satisfied	21%	16%	84%
Satisfied	68%	60%	16%
Unsatisfied	6%	13%	
Very Unsatisfied	1%	7%	
Dk/Na	4%	4%	

As the tables below illustrate, in most other ways, parents in the PMA and in the Dayton Public Schools system feel similarly about the school their oldest child attends.

Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with The Quality Of The Curriculum Or Academic Programs?

	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Very Satisfied	21%	19%	85%
Satisfied	64%	66%	15%
Unsatisfied	9%	12%	
Very Unsatisfied	2%	3%	
Dk/Na	3%	1%	

Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with The Extent Of Parental Involvement?			
	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Very Satisfied	18%	20%	72%
Satisfied	61%	61%	28%
Unsatisfied	14%	14%	
Very Unsatisfied	2%	3%	
Dk/Na	5%	3%	

Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with The Size Of The Classes?			
	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Very Satisfied	12%	11%	62%
Satisfied	64%	61%	36%
Unsatisfied	17%	19%	3%
Very Unsatisfied	1%	6%	
Dk/Na	6%	3%	

Problems in the Schools

Respondents were read a list of problems which many public schools encounter and asked if each is a serious problem, a problem but not serious, or no problem at all in the public schools in their community.

Without a doubt, residents view parents who do not make their children study and behave properly to be the most serious problem facing the schools. Forty-two percent (42%) classify this as a serious problem and another 37% say it is a problem. Only 14% of PMA residents view this as not a problem.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community? Parents Who Don't Make Their Children Study Hard And Behave Properly					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	42%	45%	35%	36%	50%
Problem/Not serious	37%	38%	36%	43%	31%
Not a problem	14%	11%	21%	14%	8%
Dk/Na	7%	6%	8%	7%	11%

Although respondents who have children in the public schools consider this to be a problem, they are not nearly as likely as their counterparts who do not have children in the public schools to consider it a serious problem.

There is only one demographic finding of interest: In the Dayton Public Schools, African American parents are more likely than white ones (38% vs. 31%) to consider this to be a serious problem.

The lack of discipline is the next most serious problem residents see. Overall, 34% consider the lack of discipline to be a serious problem and 35% consider it a problem. Just about one in four (26%) report that discipline is not a problem in the local public schools. The lack of discipline is seen as more serious by parents of DPS students than those of public school parents generally. Thirty-seven percent of public school parents say that a lack of discipline is not a problem in their local public schools. This compares with only 23% of DPS parents who feel the same way.

Wealthier residents do not feel the lack of discipline is as serious a problem as do those who have less wealth. Only 27% who earn $45,000 or more per year say it is a serious problem. 36% of those earning $25,001-$45,000, and 34% who earn less than that consider it to be a serious problem.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community?
Not Enough Discipline

	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	34%	38%	22%	38%	59%
Problem/Not serious	35%	35%	36%	35%	24%
Not a problem	26%	21%	37%	23%	8%
Dk/Na	6%	6%	5%	5%	8%

The third most serious problem facing the public school is the fact that students don't learn enough. One-fourth (25%) of the residents of the PMA say this is a serious problem; 40% consider it a problem and 30% say it is not a problem.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community?
Students Not Learning Enough

	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	25%	26%	18%	28%	51%
Problem/Not serious	40%	44%	34%	36%	22%
Not a problem	30%	24%	42%	32%	17%
Dk/Na	6%	7%	5%	4%	11%

Once again DPS parents are more concerned than are parents who send their children to public schools in general. Only 18% of Public School Parents say that

students who do not learn enough is a serious problem, while 42% say it is not a problem. Among DPS parents, 28% consider it a serious problem, 36% a problem and only 32% not a problem.

The more wealth a Dayton Public School parent has, the more likely he/she is to consider the failure of students to learn to be a serious problem. Thirty-eight percent (38%) who earn $25,000-$45,000 a year, and 31% who earn more than $45,000 say that students not learning enough is a serious problem. Among parents who earn less than $25,000, only 21% feel the same.

Not enough attention to basics is considered a serious problem by 23% of the Dayton population. Thirty-five percent consider it a problem and another 35% consider it no problem. Half of the parents who send their children to public schools in the area say failure to pay attention to basics is not a problem. If the parent sends their child to Dayton Public Schools, however, only 38% consider it not to be a problem, while 24% say it is a serious problem.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community?
Not Enough Attention To Basics

	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	23%	27%	15%	24%	31%
Problem/Not serious	35%	36%	31%	35%	38%
Not a problem	35%	27%	50%	38%	26%
Dk/Na	8%	10%	4%	4%	6%

White respondents are somewhat more likely than African American ones (24% vs. 18%) to consider this a serious problem. Among parents who send their children to the Dayton Public Schools, however, there is little difference in the proportion who consider this to be serious (white 24%; African American 25%).

Overcrowded classrooms are not considered to be a serious problem. Overall, only 15% classify overcrowded classrooms as a serious problem; 34% say they are a problem and 39% believe overcrowded classrooms are not a problem.

The problem of overcrowded classrooms is much more pronounced in the Dayton Public Schools. Overall, two-thirds (66%) of parents who send their children to DPS consider overcrowding a problem, with 20% who say it is a serious problem. If this is compared to the responses of all parents who send their children to the public schools in the PMA, only 49% consider overcrowding a problem, with just 12% who say it is serious.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community? Overcrowded Classrooms					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	15%	16%	12%	20%	25%
Problem/Not serious	34%	31%	37%	46%	35%
Not a problem	39%	38%	45%	29%	20%
Dk/Na	12%	16%	6%	5%	19%

Among the general population, African-Americans are much more likely to view overcrowding as a serious problem than are their counterparts who are white (22% vs. 14%). White parents in the Dayton Public Schools, although not quite as concerned about overcrowding as their African American counterparts, still view it as a serious problem (19% vs. 21%).

The problem of bad teachers is the least seriously viewed of the problems discussed. Overall, only 11% consider bad teachers to be a serious problem, while half (50%) say it is not a problem.

Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious or not a problem in the public schools in your community? Bad Teachers					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Serious Problem	11%	11%	8%	16%	27%
Problem/Not serious	28%	31%	23%	32%	37%
Not a problem	50%	45%	62%	45%	29%
Dk/Na	11%	14%	8%	8%	8%

Parents in the PMA who send their children to public school are most satisfied, with 62% who say bad teachers are not a problem and only 8% who consider them to be a serious problem. Among parents who send their children to DPS, the views are much different. 16% of DPS parents consider bad teachers to be a serious problem and an additional 32% consider them to be a problem, for a total problem rating of 48%. In contrast, only 45% of these parents say bad teachers are not a problem in the schools in their community.

Respondents were asked what other problems they see facing the public schools in their community. Safety issues, such as weapons in the schools, drugs, gangs, etc. were often mentioned. Other problems in the minds of residents include discipline problems, such as skipping school and the lack of respect for teachers and busing, something that is often on the minds of parents who send their children to DPS.

The table below illustrates the greater concern DPS parents have when compared to area-wide public school parents. Other than the fact that both sets of

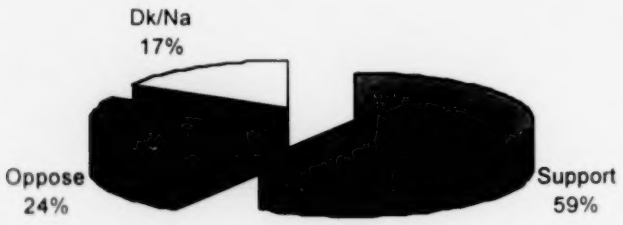
parents similarly view parents who don't make their children study hard and behave properly as a serious problem, DPS parents see their schools facing more serious problems than those faced by area-wide public schools.

Proportion Of Parents Who Consider Each To Be A Serious Problem						
	Problems Facing the Local Public Schools					
	Parents Don't Make Children Behave	Not Enough Discipline	Students Not Learning Enough	Not Enough Attention To Basics	Over-crowded Classrooms	Bad Teachers
Miami Valley Parents	35%	22%	18%	15%	12%	8%
DPS Parents	36%	38%	28%	24%	20%	16%

Community Schools

A series of questions about community schools was asked of respondents. The first question defined community schools and asked about support for such schools. Overall, residents of the PMA tend to support creation of community schools.

Community schools, usually called charter schools, are public schools that are started by teachers, parents, and/or community groups. They are free from most rules and regulations except health, safety and civil rights, and are open to all children whose parents choose them. They do not charge tuition. Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in your community?

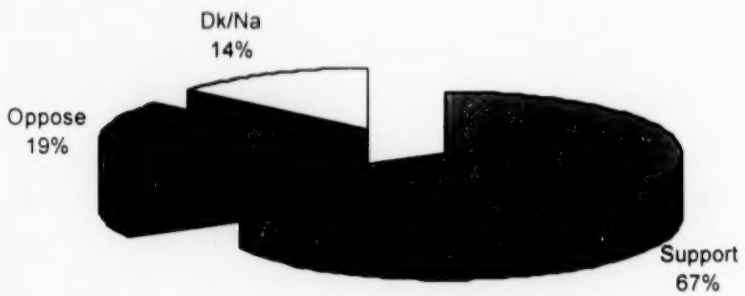


Support is highest among parents, but even among non-parents, 58% support the creation of community schools. Two-thirds (66%) of DPS parents support community schools, as do 60% of all public school parents.

Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in your community?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	59%	58%	60%	66%	64%
Oppose	24%	27%	21%	19%	13%
Dk/Na	17%	15%	19%	15%	7%

The next question concerned the creation of community schools in Dayton and asked about support or opposition for such an action. Support for community schools in Dayton is even higher than overall support for the concept.

The community school movement might lead to the creation of new public schools in Dayton with different themes, educational specialties and teaching methods that parents would be able to choose among.



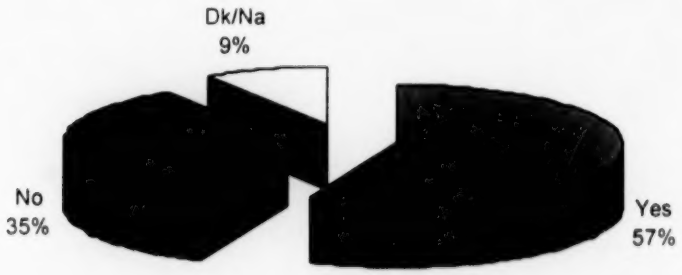
Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in Dayton?

Not unexpectedly, Dayton Public School parents are most supportive of the idea, but even among those respondents who presumably would have not directly benefit from the schools, support is high. It should be noted that African-Americans are more supportive than white respondents, but still 65% of whites in the PMA and 71% of white parents of Dayton Public School students support the creation of community schools in Dayton.

Would you support of oppose the creation of these new public schools in Dayton?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	67%	67%	67%	75%	68%
Oppose	19%	19%	18%	14%	17%
Dk/Na	14%	14%	15%	11%	15%

If there were a new school in the community, 57% would consider sending their children to that school as an alternative to the schools they are presently attending; 35% would not and 9% are not sure.

If there was a new school in your community, would you consider sending your children there as an



alternative to the schools they presently attend?

The proportion that would consider sending their children to alternative schools is similar, no matter what public school their children now attend.

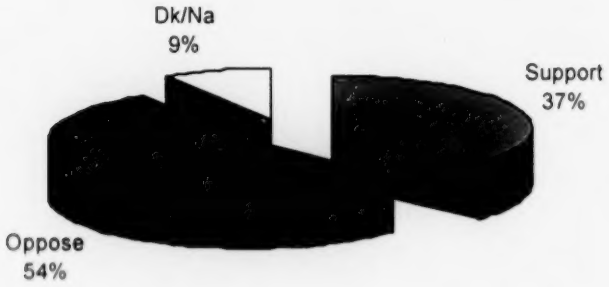
If there was a new school in your community, would you consider sending your children there as an alternative to the schools they presently attend?			
	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Yes	59%	57%	39%
No	31%	29%	58%
Dk/Na	10%	14%	3%

Area-wide, females are much less likely than males (49% vs. 65%) to consider sending their children to alternative schools. Among DPS parents, however, females (56%) are almost as likely as males (59%) to say they would consider such a change.

Respondents are not comfortable with private companies managing some of the new public schools. Overall, only 37% support such management while 54% oppose it.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one.

Allow private companies to manage some of the new public schools

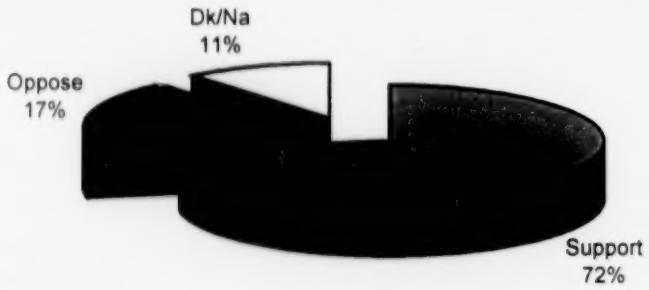


Support is slightly stronger among residents with more wealth. 41% of those who earn more than $45,000 per year support private companies managing some of the new public schools; among those who earn less than $25,000, 36% support it.

Finally, residents were asked if they would support the creation of community schools in suburban and rural areas as well as in the eight major cities in which they are currently allowed. Almost three-fourths (72%) say they would support these schools; 17% would not support them outside the eight major cities, and 11% are not sure.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one.

Allow new community schools to be started in suburban and rural area (Ohio law now only allows them in eight major cities including Dayton)



Support is consistent among parents and non-parents in the PMA. The only group of people who show less enthusiasm for this idea are African American parents of DPS students, 66% of whom support the idea and 27% of whom oppose it. Among white parents of DPS students, 77% support community schools outside the eight major cities.

Allow new community schools to be started in suburban and rural areas. (Ohio low now only allows them in eight major cities, including Dayton)					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	72%	72%	70%	72%	81%
Oppose	17%	17%	20%	19%	6%
Dk/Na	11%	11%	10%	9%	13%

Parental Choice

Residents were asked if they favored allowing parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense. This is the same question asked in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the public's attitudes toward public schools. The results in the PMA are very similar to those that Gallup obtained nationally.

Locally, 54% support using public monies to pay for private schooling; 40% oppose it and 6% don't know. Nationally, 51% support it.

A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you support or oppose this proposal?						
	US Adults	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	51%	54%	49%	60%	74%	73%
Oppose	45%	40%	45%	34%	20%	19%
Dk/Na	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%	8%

Parents exhibit significantly more support for this proposal than do non-parents, with those parents who currently send their children to Dayton Public School exhibiting the greatest support.

If parents could send their oldest child to any public or private school, with the tuition paid by the government, 44% of public school parents and 60% of DPS parents would choose to do so. Only 36% of DPS parents would elect to send their oldest child to the school he/she currently attends. Nationally, 51% of parents would continue to send their oldest child to his/her current school, while 46% would elect a different school.

Suppose you could send your oldest child to any public, private or church-related school of your choice, with tuition paid for by the government. Would you send you oldest child to the school he or she now attends or to a different school?				
	National Parents	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Same school	51%	51%	36%	93%
Different school	46%	44%	60%	7%
Dk/Na	3%	5%	4%	

The PACE Program

Only about three residents in ten (31%) have ever heard about the PACE Program which makes it possible for hundreds of low income children in Montgomery County to attend the private or public school of their choice.

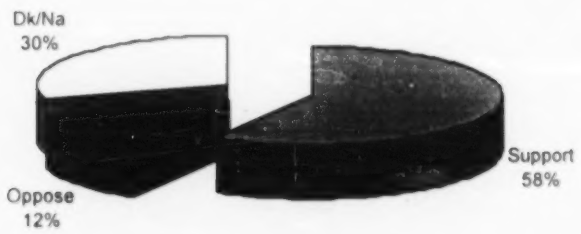
For the next several years private donations will make it possible for hundreds of low income children in Montgomery County to attend the private or public school of their choice. No government money is involved. This is called the PACE Program. Are you aware of, or have you ever heard about this PACE Program?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Yes	31%	34%	24%	28%	44%
No	68%	65%	73%	72%	56%
Dk/Na	2%	2%	2%	1%	

The higher the income of the respondent, the more likely he/she is to be aware of the PACE Program. Only 27% of those who earn less than $25,000 a year are aware of the program. Awareness increases with increased wealth until 35% who earn more than $45,000 a year are aware.

African-Americans are more likely to be aware of the program than are whites (37% vs. 30%).

Whether or not they were aware of the program prior to the interview, all respondents were asked if they support or oppose the program. Overall, 59% support it, while only 12% oppose it. There is a large proportion (30%) of the

Do you support or oppose the PACE Program?



population, however, who are not sure how they feel about PACE.

Dayton Public School parents support the program more than parents who send their children to public schools in the PMA. In fact, only 53% of PMA public school parents support PACE. This compares with 64% of DPS parents who registered support.

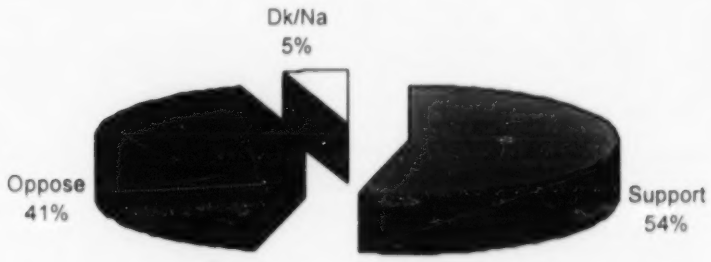
Do you support of oppose the PACE Program?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	59%	62%	53%	64%	66%
Oppose	12%	11%	13%	9%	9%
Dk/Na	30%	27%	34%	27%	24%

Public School Choice

Slightly more than half the population supports the idea of allowing students to choose to attend any public school in the state.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one.

Allow students to choose any public school in the state, even in another district



Dayton Public School parents exhibited much stronger support for this proposal than either public school parents in the PMA or non-parents.

Allow students to choose any public school in the state, even in another district					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parents	DPS Parents	NPS Parents
Support	54%	51%	58%	69%	65%
Oppose	41%	44%	37%	28%	30%
Dk/Na	5%	6%	4%	3%	6%

Standards, Testing, and Accountability

A number of questions were asked to investigate the views of poll respondents on standards, testing, and accountability measures. The first was also asked in the Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. It asks whether respondents support or oppose a voluntary national testing program for fourth and eighth graders. Nationally, 71% of respondents support this testing program, while 25% oppose it. In the Dayton area, the proposal is even more popular, 77% support the idea while 18% oppose it.

A proposal has been made that the federal government administer a voluntary national testing program that would routinely test 4th and 8th grade students in order to measure the performance of the nation's public schools. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal?						
	National Adults	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	71%	77%	76%	81%	85%	76%
Oppose	25%	18%	19%	16%	12%	22%
Dk/Na	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%

National testing is more popular with public school parents than among those with no children. 81% of public school parents and 85% of DPS parents support this voluntary testing.

Currently, Ohio requires that all students must pass a 9th grade proficiency test in order to graduate from high school. This requirement is popular with residents of the PMA, as 87% support it, while only 11% oppose it. Although respondents with no children in school are slightly more likely to favor this requirement, more than eight in ten parents are also agreeable.

All students in Ohio have to pass the State's 9th grade proficiency test in core academic subjects in order to graduate from high school. Do you support or oppose this policy?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	87%	88%	85%	83%	88%
Oppose	11%	10%	12%	16%	12%
Dk/Na	2%	2%	2%	1%	

80% of female parents of Dayton Public School students support proficiency exams in order to graduate. Male parents are much more supportive, with 92% saying they support these exams.

Respondents were also asked if they favor or oppose requiring all students in Ohio to pass Ohio's proficiency tests in order to move on to the next grade. Support for this proposal is also extremely high, with 87% who say they support it.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each. Require that all students pass Ohio's proficiency tests in core academic subjects in order to move on to the next grade.					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	87%	89%	85%	80%	87%
Oppose	11%	10%	14%	17%	13%
Dk/Na	2%	2%	2%	3%	

Support for this proposal is highest among respondents with no children in school. Among public school parents, 85% support it, while 80% of DPS parents support this proposal.

Area-wide, females are somewhat less likely than males to support these proficiency tests (85% vs. 90%). If we look only at female parents of Dayton Public School students, support drops significantly. Only 73% of the female parents interviewed, as opposed to 95% of the male parents interviewed, support proficiency tests in order to move on to the next grade.

The final question that deals with accountability asked if respondents support a requirement which would stop state colleges and universities from admitting students who are not ready for college-level academic work. Three-fourths (75%) support such a requirement and 21% oppose it. DPS parents exhibit the least support for this proposal.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each.
Stop state colleges and universities from admitting students who are not ready for college-level academic work.

	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	75%	74%	76%	67%	92%
Oppose	21%	22%	22%	28%	8%
Dk/Na	3%	4%	3%	5%	

African-Americans, whether in the general population (65%) or parents of DPS students (65%), are less likely than their white counterparts (78% & 75% respectively) to support this proposal.

Teachers

Three questions investigated respondents' opinions about the accountability of teachers. The first asked if respondents support or oppose the end to teacher certification providing potential teachers can pass a test proving that they know their subject.

Most (63%) respondents support this action, but there is a significant minority (32%) who opposes ending certification.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each. End certification of teachers as long as they can pass a test proving that they know their subject					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	63%	65%	60%	63%	64%
Oppose	32%	31%	35%	31%	31%
Dk/Na	4%	4%	5%	6%	6%

Support for this proposal tends to fall off dramatically as wealth increases. Seven in ten (70%) respondents who earn less than $25,000 a year support the end to teacher certification, as do 64% of those with incomes between $25,001 and $45,000. Among people who earn more than $45,000, however, only 59% support the end to teacher certification.

People tend to be in favor of paying teachers more if their students can pass the state tests in core subjects. This is especially true of those who have children in the public schools. Those who have no children in school are less enthused with the idea of paying teachers more if their students can pass tests.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each. Pay teachers more if their students learn enough to pass the state test in core subjects					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	60%	56%	68%	69%	46%
Oppose	35%	38%	28%	23%	44%
Dk/Na	6%	6%	5%	8%	9%

African-Americans are especially enthusiastic about this proposal, with 71% who support the idea of paying teachers more if their students can pass proficiency tests. In contrast, only 57% of white respondents support the proposal. A similar result is evident when looking at the responses of Dayton Public School parents only. 73% of the African American parents support this proposal. A smaller percentage (64%) of white parents feels the same way.

Although most would like to reward teachers who do a good job, they are not comfortable firing teachers whose students cannot pass state tests. Overall, 38% support this idea, while 55% oppose it.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each. Fire teachers if their students do not learn enough to pass state tests in core academic subjects					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	38%	36%	39%	32%	43%
Oppose	55%	55%	54%	58%	49%
Dk/Na	8%	8%	7%	10%	8%

African-Americans in the PMA, though willing to reward success, do not appear willing to punish failure. Among African-Americans, only 29% support firing teachers whose students cannot pass state tests. 39% of whites support this action.

African-Americans who send their children to DPS, however, are much more willing to hold teachers accountable; 35% support firing teachers whose students cannot pass proficiency tests. Among white DPS parents, only 27% are willing to fire teachers who fail.

Teachers' Unions

Most teachers in public schools belong to unions. The public, however, is undecided on the effect this unionization has had on the schools; 22% say it has helped, 29% say it has hurt and 38% believe that unionization has had no effect on the quality of public education in the United States. The results in the local area are somewhat more negative than those obtained by Gallup when this question was asked nationally.

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education in the U.S.?						
	National Adults	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Helped	27%	22%	25%	20%	26%	8%
Hurt	26%	29%	30%	25%	21%	53%
No difference	37%	38%	34%	47%	42%	34%
Dk/Na	10%	10%	12%	8%	11%	6%

Thirty percent (30%) of those who have no children in school believe that unionization has hurt public education. A plurality of public school parents (47%) and Dayton Public School parents (42%) believe that unionization has made no difference in public schools. Less than one respondent in four (22%) believe that unions have helped public education.

About two-thirds (64%) of respondents do not think that the teachers' unions should have the power to prevent existing public schools from being changed into

community schools; only 22% believe unions should have this power and 15% are not sure.

Under current Ohio low, teachers' unions have the power to prevent an existing public school from being changed into a community school. Should unions have this power or not?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Should have	22%	22%	24%	32%	9%
Should not have	64%	64%	60%	55%	71%
Dk/Na	15%	14%	16%	13%	19%

Dayton Public School parents are more likely than any other group to think this power should reside with the unions (32%). Specifically, it tends to be the African American parents who feel this way. 38% of African American DPS parents think the union should have the power to prevent existing public schools from being converted to community schools. Only 26% of white parents feel the same way.

School Funding

Respondents views are mixed on whether or not taxpayers are getting their money's worth from the public schools. The question "Do you believe that the taxpayers are getting their money's worth from the public schools?" was asked twice during the interview; once very early in the questionnaire and once toward the end of the questionnaire. The views expressed, though similar, show some migration.

The first time the question was asked, 42% of respondents felt that they were getting their money's worth, while 51% said they were not. Parents of Dayton Public School children are adamant that the taxpayers are not getting their money's worth, with almost three-fourths (73%) who say they are not. Parents of public school students in general, are somewhat more complimentary, with 44% who say that taxpayers are getting their money's worth and 48% who say they are not.

Do you believe that taxpayers in your community are getting their money's worth from the public schools or not?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Getting	42%	41%	44%	23%	24%
Not getting	51%	51%	48%	73%	70%
Dk/Na	8%	7%	8%	4%	6%

When respondents were asked a second time about getting their money's worth from public schools, they were slightly more complimentary, but still, 46% say they are not. Once again, parents of DPS students are most unhappy, with 71%

who say the taxpayers are not getting their money's worth.

Do you believe that taxpayers in your community are getting their money's worth from the public schools or not?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Getting	49%	49%	53%	25%	15%
Not getting	46%	46%	42%	71%	76%
Dk/Na	5%	4%	5%	4%	9%

Residents don't think they are getting effective use of the money the schools are receiving, but they also do not think that the schools are getting enough funding in order to be able to do a good job. This is especially true of parents who send their children to Dayton Public Schools. In fact, the only segment of the population which thinks the schools get more than enough money is that small group (n=31) of residents who send their children to non-public schools.

Do you believe that the public schools in your community have more than enough funding to do a good job, just the right amount of funding or too little funding?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
More than enough	19%	19%	15%	11%	37%
Right amount	32%	34%	30%	20%	29%
Too little	41%	38%	49%	66%	19%
Dk/Na	8%	9%	6%	3%	15%

More than two-thirds (68%) of PMA residents believe that all school districts in the state should receive the same amount of money to spend per student, even if the district itself does not have the ability to provide that funding. This view is especially prevalent among parents who send their children to public schools, with those who send their children to Dayton Public Schools most apt to feel this way (84%).

Should all the school districts in Ohio receive the same amount of money to spend per student, regardless of the district's ability to provide that funding?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Should	68%	67%	71%	84%	68%
Should not	25%	25%	25%	11%	24%
Dk/Na	7%	8%	4%	5%	8%

The final question regarding funding asked if residents were willing to spend more money or cut spending in other areas of school funding in order to reduce the size of classes in all schools. Two-thirds (67%) support this proposal, 24% oppose it and 9% are not sure.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one. Reduce class size in all schools, even if it means spending more money or cutting other areas of the school spending.					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	67%	66%	67%	73%	77%
Oppose	24%	24%	25%	19%	16%
Dk/Na	9%	9%	8%	7%	7%

Miscellaneous Issues

A number of other questions dealing with various proposals to improve public education were read to respondents and they were asked whether they would support or oppose each.

The one which obtains the strongest support is to end busing to achieve racial balance. Overall, 82% support this proposal, while only 14% oppose it. Among Dayton Public School parents, 86% supports the end of busing.

A proposal has been made that the Dayton Public Schools should no longer be required to bus students to achieve racial balance and that students would be free to attend schools in their neighborhoods or the schools of their choice. In general, do you support or oppose this proposal?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	82%	80%	84%	86%	92%
Oppose	14%	15%	12%	13%	8%
Dk/Na	4%	5%	4%	1%	

Although white parents of DPS students are more likely (94%) than African-Americans to support the end to busing for racial balance, still 81% of African-Americans who send their children to DPS support its end.

Another proposal that generates a lot of support moves students who are troublemakers into alternative schools. Two-thirds (66%) of PMA residents support this action, while 27% oppose it and 7% are not sure. Parents who send their children to DPS are most likely to support this proposal, with 71% who say they do.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one. Move students who are troublemakers into alternative schools.					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	66%	65%	68%	71%	60%
Oppose	27%	27%	26%	24%	31%
Dk/Na	7%	8%	6%	5%	9%

Support for this proposal is fairly consistent across demographic groupings, except for the fact that African American parents of DPS students are more likely to support it than are their white counterparts (75% vs. 65%).

A proposal about which residents are less sure involves allowing individual schools to make decisions rather than having decisions come from the Board of Education or the Superintendent's Office. Forty-two percent (42%) support building-based management, 49% oppose it and 8% are not sure.

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of the public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one. Allow individual schools to make decisions about what to teach, which teachers to hire and how to spend their money, rather than having such decisions made by the Board or the Superintendent's Office.					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Support	42%	43%	40%	45%	45%
Oppose	49%	47%	54%	42%	45%
Dk/Na	8%	10%	6%	13%	10%

There are two demographic findings of note. Dayton Public School parents who earn more than $45,000 annually are most supportive (53%) of this idea. As wealth declines, so does support for building-based management. Also, female DPS parents are more supportive than male parents (48% vs. 39%).

Respondents were read a list of actions and asked which they would want done first if schools in their community had a history of failing to give kids a quality education. Basically, views are very divided on this issue. Twenty-two percent (22%) would like to see the State take over and run failing schools, 19% want companies which specialize in education to run the schools and 18% think additional money should be made available to the schools.

If the schools in your community failed for many years to give kids a quality education, which of the following would you want done first?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Give parents money to send their children to private schools	15%	14%	15%	27%	25%
Fire all staff at the unsuccessful school and start over again	11%	10%	13%	9%	7%
Increase the money the public schools get	18%	19%	17%	23%	9%
Have companies that specialize in education run the schools	19%	16%	23%	16%	29%
Have the state take over and run the schools	22%	24%	19%	12%	12%
Dk/Na	16%	18%	12%	14%	18%

People who have no children in school are more likely to think that the State should run unsuccessful schools (24%) or that the schools should get more money in order to do a good job (19%). Parents of public school students have slightly different views. They want companies that specialize in education to run failing schools (23%) or the State to take them over (19%).

Those parents who send their children to Dayton Public Schools would like to see parents be given money so they can send their children to private schools (27%) or an increase in funding for the schools (23%).

Other Miscellaneous Issues

Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents think the local board of education is doing a good job of improving public education; 26% think they are doing a poor job and 12% do not know.

Parents who send their children to Dayton Public Schools have the most negative view of their local Board of Education, with 45% who say the board is doing a poor job and only 42% who think it is doing a good job.

Do you think that the local board in your community is doing a good job or a poor job of improving public education?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Good job	63%	63%	67%	42%	25%
Poor job	26%	25%	25%	45%	50%
Dk/Na	12%	13%	8%	14%	24%

Just 25% of the population consider themselves to be very well informed about how the individual schools in their communities rank in test scores and graduation rates. This is true regardless of whether the respondent has children in school or not. Another 25% say they are not well informed and 47% consider themselves to be somewhat well informed.

How well informed do you think you are about how the individual schools in your community rank in test scores and graduation rates?					
	PMA	No Children	PS Parent	DPS Parent	NPS Parent
Very well informed	25%	25%	25%	25%	24%
Somewhat well informed	47%	48%	47%	50%	41%
Not well informed	25%	24%	26%	23%	25%
Dk/Na	3%	4%	2%	2%	9%

In the general population, those most likely to consider themselves to be very well informed earn more than $45,000 a year (29%) and/or are female (27%) when compared to males (22%). More than three in ten (31%) African-Americans in the general population consider themselves not well informed about these issues.

When looking at the responses of Dayton Public School parents, a different pattern emerges. Twice as many African American parents as white parents (31% vs. 15%) consider themselves very well informed. Although 31% of DPS parents who earn more than $45,000 a year consider themselves to be very well informed, so do 33% of those earning $25,001-$45,000 a year. The only income group among DPS parents who feel they are not well informed are those with incomes of less than $25,000 a year (28% not well informed).

Forum

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation asked five distinguished community leaders to write a brief essay in response to the following questions:

What do these findings mean for school reform in Dayton? What do the differences among Dayton, the Miami Valley, and the United States reveal? What action should local policymakers take based on these findings?

Here are their responses, accompanied by the personal views of foundation president Chester E. Finn, Jr.:

Michelle Campbell

The findings were very alarming. It is obvious that Miami Valley parents want more choices. Race, gender, or income level does not matter when it comes to this issue. All parents desire a better education for their children.

Funding was another area where I found startling results. According to the survey, parents in Dayton and the Miami Valley believe that our public school system does not receive enough funding and that money should be distributed equally to all public schools. I was very pleased to learn that parents would send their children to community schools and support a voucher program to fund their educational choice.

I was disturbed to find that students are ill prepared to attend state universities and colleges. Many students are not able to handle college-level academic work. Seventy percent of Dayton Public School parents and 75% of Miami Valley parents believe universities should stop admitting these students.

Once again, these findings show that we are not addressing the real issues. The real problems affecting public schools include poorly educating our children, lack of accountability for teachers, failure of the school board to serve its community, and unequal distribution of funds. Parental involvement, however, is on the rise. The report shows that 60.5% of Dayton Public School's parents and 57% of Miami Valley parents are satasfied with the amount of parental involvement in public school systems. Our community definitely needs more information on vouchers, the PACE program, and community schools.

This report shows us that it is time for our educational system to move in a different direction. Tax dollars should be given to parents to send their children to the school of their choice. The funding can be given in the form of school vouchers. Money should follow the child, whether it be to a community school, private/ parochial school, or another public school system.

Michelle Campbell is president of the Parents' Coalition for Change, a grass-roots Dayton organization

Sue S. Elling

The survey's design, combining Dayton responses with those from the rest of the area rather than separating these groups, makes comparisons and conclusions difficult. However, a number of issues stand out. Dayton and the Miami Valley rate their own schools highly, but they want better schools and support choice.

Huge numbers express satisfaction with the quality of academic programs at their own child's school. Still, they want students to learn more, and they want schools to be held accountable—there is amazing support for both state and national tests.

While the community is eager for better schools and strongly supports choice, most parents and citizens are confused about it. Most would choose another school for their child if the government paid the tuition; even higher percentages support a program that would provide this government support. In fact, the majority supports government-paid tuition so that children can choose any school in the state. More than half of parents would consider sending their child to a community school. But, there is limited understanding of both PACE and the community/ charter school model. Most report no awareness of PACE. And, less than half agree that individual schools should make decisions about what to teach, which teachers to hire and how to spend their money—key elements of the charter school model. This confusion certainly has implications for the success of both of these new choices and for the work of those who are championing them.

The survey outlines a number of implications for local school districts. They need to be alert to the fact that even parents who would rate their own child's school highly and say that they are satisfied with the quality of the academic programs at their child's school are willing to consider other options. Respondents agree that students are not learning enough, and troubling numbers say that there are too many "bad" teachers. Districts cannot be complacent because competition for students is being introduced, and parents are saying that they like it and will take advantage of it to find a school that has good teachers and high standards with accountability. Fewer than 20% of Dayton's parents and only 6% of the Miami Valley population express dissatisfaction with the safety at their child's school; however, the groups agree that there is not enough discipline and that "troublemakers" should be moved to alternative schools. In addition, funding could be even more difficult to generate locally than in the past as 72% of DPS parents say that taxpayers are not getting their money's worth.

State and local policymakers—especially in the midst of the school funding crisis in Ohio—should note the call for "equal" funding for all school districts, regardless of the district's ability to pay and the demand for standards and accountability for both existing schools and new choice options. This has implications for the quality and use of the new school Report Cards, for the quality of the community school applications that lead to contracts from the state, and for how the

contract provisions for accountability are monitored.

Sue S. Elling is Executive Director of the Alliance for Education, a Dayton-based organization dedicated to improving the public schools

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Chester E. Finn, Jr.

It's clear that the parents and other citizens of Dayton and the Miami Valley have a keen appetite for the kinds of bold education reforms that are taking root elsewhere in America. How else could one interpret these findings?

- A clear majority (including three-fifths of Miami Valley public school parents and three-quarters of Dayton public school parents) support government-funded vouchers.
- More than 60% favor charter schools (known in Ohio as "community schools") and even larger fractions would like to see some created in Dayton.
- More than 80% believe that children should be promoted to the next grade and graduated from high school only after they pass statewide proficiency tests.
- Three-quarters favor national testing.
- Three-fifths would end state certification of teachers (provided that teachers pass a subject matter test).
- More than two-thirds favor merit pay for teachers whose students do well on state tests.
- Most support equalized public school funding across the state.
- 85% would terminate Dayton's mandatory busing for racial balance and instead allow students to attend neighborhood schools or the schools of their choice.

Those are eight very big changes from standard practice in primary/secondary education in America, in Ohio, and in the Dayton area. But they're changes that are beginning to take hold in a number of places. It appears that most Miami Valley residents are ready—perhaps even eager—for them to reach Southwestern Ohio.

Why the hearty appetite for change? Quite simply because people aren't content with the status quo.

To be sure, in the Dayton area as throughout America, most parents give high marks to their own child's school. But as the distinguished research organization, Public Agenda, has demonstrated, this "satisfaction" may be just an inch deep. Why else would 44% of Miami Valley public school parents, and a whopping 59% of Dayton parents, prefer to send their child to a *different* school if the government would pay for it? Why, if charter schools were an option, would nearly three parents in five (in both Dayton and environs) consider sending their children to them rather than to their present schools?

What is it that troubles parents about their children's current schools? These concerns vary, of course, but non-trivial numbers of people find that such things as discipline, attention to "the basics," and "students not learning enough" are serious problems in the schools of their communities.

And when it comes to their own kids' schools, one fifth of DPS parents are dissatisfied about safety and one quarter are concerned about class size.

Daytonians also seem to have several beefs with larger issues of policy and management. Almost three-quarters of DPS parents, and nearly half of those in the Miami Valley, don't think that taxpayers are getting their money's worth from their public schools. Forty-five percent of Dayton parents think that the local school board is doing a poor job of improving public education (compared with 42% who think it's doing a good job).

Discontent with the present arrangements breeds eagerness for reform. But something else may also be going on. The winds of education change have begun to blow through the Miami Valley, meaning that it's easier today than it was yesterday for people to visualize schools, programs and policies that are different from those they have long taken for granted. There's already one charter school in Dayton that they can observe; this is no longer a hypothetical reform. Although not quite a third of adults in the Dayton area are yet acquainted with the privately funded scholarship program known as PACE, when the idea is explained to them three out of five support it (and just 12 percent are opposed). With city after city around the United States persuading the courts that the time has come to end compulsory busing and instead devote resources and energy to the quality of children's education, one would have to be heedless indeed not to wonder why Dayton must keep busing.

It's also important to acknowledge that not every reform idea abroad in the land wins high marks in Dayton. A (bare) majority opposes letting private companies manage public schools. A (slender) majority opposes firing teachers whose students flunk state proficiency tests. And when asked what to do with failing public schools, there's no clear consensus.

Insofar as we can compare public and parental attitudes in Dayton and the Miami Valley to the U.S., we find more similarities than differences. Like the rest of America, area residents tend to assign low marks to public schools in general, medium grades to the schools of their own communities, and fairly high grades to their own children's schools. Like the rest of America, area residents now favor vouchers and national testing. Like the rest of America, area residents are split in their appraisal of the effects of teacher unionization on the quality of public education.

It shouldn't surprise us that area residents also share the country's appetite to try bolder education reforms than have previously been the norm. The question for community (and state) leaders is whether that appetite will now be sated. It seems to me hard to deny that the public is conferring a mandate for dramatic change.

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Thomas J. Lasley

The Fordham Survey represents an important first step toward fully understanding what the public wants from its education system. The Dayton and Miami Valley trends match, to a reasonable degree, what is evidenced nationally: about half the parents give public schools a grade of A or B (40% for Dayton; 59% for Miami Valley), about two-thirds of the public school parents give their own child's school an A or B; and, a majority of parents (locally and nationally) favor government assistance for tuition-related expenses.

The parallels between the Dayton and the national data are not surprising. And, considering the level of poverty within Dayton (a city that has a high rate of poverty), it's not surprising that Dayton's parents have more negative sentiments on many of the items than is evidenced for Miami Valley adults or in the national polls of parental attitudes. Even given the possible social and economic explanations for the more negative Dayton parents' attitudes, however, some disturbing indicators are in the data. For example, if only Dayton parents and Miami Valley adults are compared, significant differences occur in their perceptions on several key items. Dayton parents are much more inclined to think they are not getting their money's worth out of the education system; they are much more supportive of a voucher system; and they are much more inclined (if given adequate financial support) to send an oldest child to a different school than the one he or she is currently attending. The Dayton parents also are more inclined to perceive that the schools, as currently constituted, do not have adequate financial resources. This latter finding creates an interesting conundrum: If the Dayton parents are not getting their money's worth, is it because the funds within the district are not properly spent or is it because adequate funds are not available? One of the real problems with surveys is that they do nothing to reveal information about causality. They show what is, but they do not suggest why a particular reality exists. The school funding results of the Fordham survey are but one illustration of this phenomenon.

Some curious contradictions emerge in the data. Some contradictions are inherent in conflicting perceptions vis-a-vis what schools are providing as learning environments. For example, Dayton (85%) and Miami Valley residents (87%) express satisfaction with the quality of academic programs, but both also indicate a concern with students' not learning enough (Dayton, 64%; Miami Valley, 65%). Is it possible to have good academic programs without sufficient student learning?

Another contradiction issue relates to the problems inherent in financial fairness for students. Approximately 68% of the Miami Valley parents assert a need for equal funding of schools; almost 84% of the Dayton parents assert such a need. Unfortunately, if equal funding did occur (if funds were distributed equally to all schools on a per pupil basis) the consequences would likely be much more grave for Dayton students than for many of those families that are part of the larger

Miami Valley region. Many students who come from the greater Miami Valley area schools enter classrooms with substantial social capital; the burden on their schools, as a consequence, is lessened (clearly not eliminated). Many Dayton students, though intellectually able, enter classrooms with less social capital, a fact that causes the school's educational burden to be increased. Funding equality appears to be a socially fair concept, but it is a concept with inherently complex policy implications. Whether the social capital of students can be "adjusted" by differential funding is questionable, but that students with different needs "demand" differential financial support is unassailable.

Fordham provides a unique look at how Dayton parents compare to Miami Valley adults and to national parent audiences. Though many of the comparisons make Dayton parents appear more negative, what is not known is how other cities within, for example, the Council of Great City Schools, might do on a similar comparison. School Match and other education auditing firms compare similar cities to see how school practices and student performance look with "matched" cities. Comparing Dayton parents to the Miami Valley adults is interesting, but in many respects unfair. Comparing Dayton parents to Cincinnati parents may reveal more specifically where parents in urban contexts feel their schools are failing and how they believe schools should respond to ameliorate problem conditions.

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Samuel R. Staley

The Fordham Survey provides additional concrete evidence that public school parents are interested in real education reform that expands parental choice and the variety of educational alternatives for their children. The results also show that inner-city parents are especially concerned about the quality of education their children receive and support dramatic changes in education funding to achieve wider choices and better outcomes.

Dayton Public School parents, according to the survey, are less satisfied with the overall quality of the education their children receive than parents in the broader Miami Valley. Only 9% of the Dayton public school parents gave the public school district in their community an A. Thirty-one percent gave their local school a B while 52% gave their schools a C, D, or F. Thus, more than half the parents believed their district was providing a mediocre or worse product. In contrast, more than half of the public school parents in the Miami Valley (51%) would give their public school district an A or B.

This is consistent with survey results in other cities and states: parents in big city school districts are significantly more dissatisfied with their local school district's

performance than parents in broader regions.

This pattern of dissatisfaction is apparent at the school building level although the results are not as dramatic. While the number of private school parents was limited, 100% of those surveyed gave the school their oldest child attended an A or a B; none graded their school a C, D, or F. Indeed, 78% of private school parents gave their school an A. In contrast, only 24% of Miami Valley public school parents and 26% of Dayton public school parents gave the school their oldest child attended an A.

The significance of this result, despite the relatively small sample of private school parents, underscores an important aspect of a market-based education system: When parents choose the school their child attends, they usually choose the school that best meets the educational needs of their child. They can, through their choice, choose the best learning environment for their child. They are thus more likely to believe their school is performing well.

The importance of using public policy to expand choice, particularly among inner-city parents, is evident in the responses to questions about education vouchers and charter schools.

Fifty-nine percent of the Dayton public school parents—the group of parents that rated their schools' performance lowest—would send their oldest child to a different school than the one they currently attended if their tuition was paid by the government. This sentiment is much stronger for Dayton public school parents than for Miami Valley public school parents or public school parents in the nation as a whole.

Not surprisingly, Dayton public school parents supported a general voucher program that would include any public or private school of their choice by a 3 to 1 margin. Support for a voucher program was remarkably consistent across racial categories: 74.1% of African-American parents and 75.0% of white parents in the Dayton Public schools supported a voucher program.

Similarly, almost two-thirds, 63.2%, of African-American public school parents in Dayton supported the creation of community (also called "charter") schools. When informed that community schools might lead to new public schools in Dayton that could experiment with new teaching methods and focus on specialized education needs, support among African-American parents increased to 76.9%—a margin of 3 to 1.

Of course, the bottom line is whether parents would send their children to one of these new schools. Fifty-three percent of African American families and 60 percent of white families said they would consider sending their child to an alternative community school.

The results of the Fordham Survey are clear and consistent with broader national studies. Parents of inner-city children believe they need better educational alternatives and choices than presently exist. Clear majorities of white and African-American parents of students in the Dayton public schools favor either vouchers or community schools as an alternative to the current education system. Local, state and national policymakers need to embrace these

results as further evidence that a parent-driven education system is crucially important to maintaining support for public education generally and to improving performance.

The results also provide strong evidence that a move to child-centered education—where schools are funded based on enrollment and education choices are expanded to include all kinds of private schools—is supported by the grass roots and primary consumers in the education marketplace. In short, moves to expand educational choice and child-centered education rest on a foundation of broad, popular support.

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James A. Williams

The questions in the Fordham Education Survey, rather than providing any new insights, have confirmed much of what is currently known with regard to the community perceptions of the Dayton Public Schools (DPS).

The comparative data are less helpful since the school district is interested in measuring growth over time. The district faces a different set of challenges than those faced by educators throughout the Miami Valley. I would, however, be interested in comparative data from communities with similar demographics.

Survey question number one asks parents to rate the public schools. Seventy-one percent of Dayton's parents rated our schools average or better, and of that number, forty percent rated them as very good ("B") or excellent ("A"). The figures for average or better were eighty-five percent nationally and eighty-six percent in the Miami Valley.

The majority of Dayton's parents have expressed faith in our schools. I am concerned, however, that twenty-one percent of our parents perceive our schools to be poor and/or failing, particularly when we are taking steps to improve our quality of service and community outreach.

Since the district's low-income families are more school dependent, they often utilize the school district for many non-educational resources that middle-income families provide for themselves. The Dayton district often provides such services as health, nutrition, and family counseling. These utilizations should be factored into the rating, as middle-class communities are more likely to rate schools based on academic and social climate variables alone.

Question number two indicates that Dayton parents rated schools locally thirteen points higher than they rated schools nationally in the excellent and very good categories. Question three also indicates that eighty-six percent of Dayton parents give the school their oldest child attends a rating of average or better with nearly seven out of ten parents giving an excellent or very good rating. Since this rating is based on actual interactions with a particular school, it gives a clearer picture of a parent's perception. Combining the results

from questions two and three in the two top ratings suggests a vote of confidence for public education in the Dayton community.

Questions 19 and 20 suggest that Dayton parents are in favor of sending children to nonpublic schools with government subsidy. Nineteen and 20 also suggest that parents would send their children to a different school from the one that the child presently attends if given a subsidy. Since the survey examines public, private, and church related schools together, I cannot discern if parents are moving their children for religious or for other reasons. Knowing the basis for the answer given would be helpful, particularly if the language was clearer.

Public schools cannot promote a religious ideology; neither can they alter the socioeconomic demographics of the student population in schools and communities. My experience suggests that many parents would leave the public schools with government subsidy to expose their children to religious training or to a larger population of middle income students. A critical question here is whether public funds should be used to promote private interests. Using public funds to promote private interests establishes unfair competition between public schools that are restricted by state and federal laws and regulations, and private schools that are indeed quite autonomous with regard to policies and regulations. Private schools are also less subject to public scrutiny.

Question 38 indicates that most citizens favor public testing. It should be noted that most educators favor public testing. Of critical importance is for children to have the opportunity to learn the skills and content measured by local, state, and national assessments. Balanced academic standards with opportunity standards assure that poor urban schools with resources can provide equitable experiences for their students.

Most parents (question 43), throughout the country, do not perceive unions to be a detriment to quality education. The implications are that most parents are not threatened by the existence of teachers' unions. A small percentage of parents even view unions as helpful to education.

Unions need not be barriers to meaningful school reform. Teachers are critically important to our nation's future and the overwhelming majority of them are dedicated professionals who work under challenging conditions to educate and develop children. On the other hand, unions and school administrators must learn to work collaboratively. As professionals, teachers are not subject to the same working conditions as non-professional workers. Teaching is a calling that requires tremendous sacrifice and commitment, yet it is incumbent upon the local school community to provide good pay and optimum working conditions for its educators. Teachers, school administrators, and the community at large must realize that their destinies are linked. Consequently, efforts to improve schools should be guided by professional ethics and a genuine desire to create the best possible conditions for teaching and learning. While formal contracts are important, we must become a learning

community that is bound by commitment.

Public schools continue the unfinished work of the American Revolution. They provide children from diverse social and economic backgrounds with the education and development to enjoy the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our public school system is the bridge of opportunity for minority groups who have been marginalized in American society and the many immigrants who come to America to pursue dreams of freedom and prosperity. The American public school system is nothing short of a miracle in human achievement.

The Fordham Survey provides useful information. The data can be used as a leverage to enlighten and transform the school district. Nonetheless, before reaching any conclusions, we must determine if those that responded to the survey were a representative sample of the school district population. The sampling frame (who had a chance of being sampled), sampling procedures (what type of sampling was utilized), sample size, and response rate are each important in determining whether the sample represents the population. For this survey, does the sample of the 200 Dayton Public School parents represent the attitudes of all Dayton Public School parents? Unfortunately, we did not receive the necessary information to do a full assessment of the sampling method. We tend to think that the sample of parents used for this study may be unreliable.

While school officials welcome criticism, critics should also offer support for an institution that has served our democracy for over 200 years. Quality public schools are one of the four building blocks of American society. A culture based on democratic government and free enterprise must rely on a universal system of free education. Public schools provide students with the academic skills and socialization that helps them maintain the balance between the exercise of freedom and the acceptance of the responsibilities of good citizenship that freedom requires. A delicate synergy is necessary between the family, government, economic institutions, and our public system of education to create support for the human development that is our most valuable national resource. Constructive criticism serves to stimulate continuous improvement of our schools, but it must be accompanied by moral and fiscal support. Public schools are a reflection of our society and they require our collective wisdom and effort to function well.

James A. Williams, Ed.D. is superintendent of the Dayton Public Schools

Appendix: Survey Instrument

Hello, I'm ___ calling from Paragon Research. We are an opinion research firm and don't sell anything, we just conduct surveys. Today we are speaking with people in the Miami Valley about education.

May I speak to the person in your household 18 years of age or older, who has the next birthday?

A. Do you, yourself have any children in the local public schools? IF YES: Do they attend the Dayton Public Schools or another public school in the area?

IF NO: Do you have any children who attend parochial or private schools?

1. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community, A B C D or Fail?

2. How about public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the nation's public schools, A B C D or Fail?

ASK Q.B-7 OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS ONLY

B. ASK ONLY IF ATTENDING MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL: Does your oldest child attend a public school or a private or parochial school?

3. Using the A B C D Fail scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

Please think about the school your oldest child attends. Are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with each of the following there?

4. Your child's safety at school
5. The quality of the curriculum or academic programs
6. The extent of parental involvement
7. The size of the classes

ASK OF ALL
Now we have some questions about the public schools in the community. Please tell me if each of the following is a serious problem, a problem but not serious, or not a problem in the public schools in your community.

8. Overcrowded classrooms
9. Bad teachers
10. Students not learning enough
11. Not enough discipline
12. Not enough attention to the basics
13. Parents who don't make their children study hard and behave properly
14. Anything else

15. How well-informed do you think you are about how the individual schools in your community rank in test scores and graduation rates? (Very well informed, somewhat well informed, or not well informed?)

16. Do you believe that the public schools in your community have more than enough funding to do a good job, just the right amount of funding or too little funding?

17. Do you believe that the taxpayers in your community are getting their money's worth from the public schools or not?

18. In your opinion, should all school districts in Ohio receive the same amount of money to spend per student, regardless of the districts' ability to provide that funding?

19. A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you support or oppose this proposal in your state?

ASK OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS ONLY
20. Suppose you could send your oldest child to any public, private or church-related school of your choice, with tuition paid for by the government. Would you send your oldest child to the school he or she now attends or to a different school?

ASK OF ALL
21. For the next several years, private donations will make it possible for hundreds of low income children in Montgomery County to attend the private or public school of their choice. No government money is involved. This is called the PACE program. Are you aware of or have you ever heard about this PACE program?

22. Do you support or oppose the PACE program?

Now a few questions about community schools

23. Community schools, usually called charter schools, are public schools that are started by teachers, parents, and/or community groups. They are free from most rules and regulations except health, safety and civil rights, and are open to all children whose parents choose them. They do not charge tuition. Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in your community?

24. The community school movement might lead to the creation of several new public schools in Dayton with different themes, educational specialties and teaching methods, that parents would be able to choose among. Would you support or oppose the creation of these new public schools in Dayton?

25. Under current Ohio law teachers' unions have the power to prevent an existing public school from being changed into a community school. Should unions have this power or not.

ASK OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS ONLY

26. If there was a new community school in your community would you consider sending your children there as an alternative to the schools they presently attend?

ASK OF ALL

Many proposals have been made to improve the quality of public schools. As I read a list of some of these, tell me if you support or oppose each one.

ROTATE

27. Allow students to choose any public school in the state, even one in another school district.
28. Allow individual schools to make decisions about what to teach, which teachers to hire and how to spend their money, rather than having such decisions made by the board of education or superintendent's office
29. Allow private companies to manage some of the new public community schools.
30. Allow new community schools to be started in suburban and rural areas (Ohio law now only allows them in eight major cities including Dayton)
31. Require that students pass Ohio's proficiency tests in core academic subjects in order to move on to the next grade
32. Stop state colleges and universities from admitting students who are not ready for college-level academic work
33. End state certification of teachers as long as they can pass a test proving that they know their subject.

34. Pay teachers more if their students learn enough to pass state tests in core academic subjects.
35. Fire teachers if their students do not learn enough to pass state tests in core academic subjects.
36. Move students who are troublemakers into alternative schools.
37. Reduce class sizes in all schools, even if it means spending more money or cutting other areas of the school budget.

38. A proposal has been made that the federal government administer a voluntary national testing program that would routinely test 4th and 8th grade students in order to measure the performance of the nation's public schools. In general, do you support or oppose this proposal?

39. A proposal has been made that Dayton public schools should no longer be required to bus students to achieve racial balance and that students should be free to attend schools in their neighborhoods or the schools of their choice. In general, do you support or oppose this proposal?

40. All students in Ohio have to pass the state's 9th grade proficiency test in core academic subjects in order to graduate from high school. Do you support or oppose this policy?

41. If the public schools in your community failed for many years to give kids a quality education, which of the following would you want done first?

MARK ONLY ONE, ROTATE OPTIONS
- Give parents money to send their children to private schools
- Fire all staff at the unsuccessful public school and start over
- Increase the money public schools get
- Have companies that specialize in education run the local public schools
- Have the state take over and run the local public schools

42. Do you think that the local school board in your community is doing a good job or a poor job of improving public education?

43. Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions and the like. Has unionization in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education in the U.S.?

44. Do you believe that the taxpayers in your community are getting their money's worth from the public schools or not?